



# Chambers's Journal

## SIXTH SERIES.

### OF ROYAL BLOOD.

A STORY OF THE SECRET SERVICE.

By WILLIAM LE QUEUX, Author of *Whoso Findeth a Wife, Scribes and Pharisees, Zoraida, The Day of Temptation, The Great War in England, &c.*

#### CHAPTER I.—UNDER ORDERS.

**Y**OU understand?' 'Perfectly,' I answered. 'And you entirely follow my argument?'

'Entirely.'

'It is imperative that active steps must be taken to preserve England's supremacy, and at the same time frustrate this aggressive policy towards us, which is undoubtedly growing. I need not tell you that the outlook is far from reassuring. As a diplomatist you know that as well as I do. The war-cloud which rose over Europe at the end of the last administration is still darkening. It, therefore, behoves us to avoid a repetition of the recent fiasco at St Petersburg with regard to Port Arthur, and strive to prevent foreign diplomacy from again getting the better of us. You quite follow me?'

'I have always striven to do my utmost towards that end,' I answered.

'I know, Crawford. I'm perfectly conscious of that; otherwise I would not have spoken so plainly as I have now done. Recollect that I've taken you into my confidence in this matter. You did well—exceedingly well—in Vienna, and showed most creditable tact and forethought. Because of that I have recalled you, and selected you for this particular duty;' and the speaker, the Most Honourable the Marquess of Macclesfield, K.G., Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, paused, with his dark expressive eyes fixed upon me. Under those eyes many a foreign diplomatist had quivered, for so keen was he of perception that he could divine one's inmost thoughts. This calm, thin, gray-faced, rather shabbily-attired man, the great statesman upon whose actions and decisions the prosperity and integrity of the British Empire depended, had,

from the earliest moment when I had entered the Foreign Office, treated me with friendly consideration and kindly regard; and now, as, late on that dull afternoon in February, I sat in his private room in Downing Street, whither I had been summoned from the embassy in Constantinople, he spoke to me not as my master, but as my friend and counsellor.

As an attaché at Vienna, at Rome, and at the Porte, I had worked under ambassadors of various moods; but, by this feeling of friendliness which the Marquess had extended towards me, I had in my duties always felt that I was serving the great statesman personally, and not merely the particular chief I chanced for the time to be under. Undoubtedly the secret of the success of the Macclesfield Ministry in the management of foreign affairs was in great measure due to the amiability of his lordship towards the staff.

'I cannot disguise from myself that this duty is extremely difficult,' he went on, leaning back in his chair after a pause and glancing around the fine room, with its life-size portrait of Her Majesty upon the green-painted wall. 'Nevertheless, secret services must sometimes be performed; and I have sufficient confidence in your diplomatic instinct to know that you will never act rashly, nor display any ill-advised zeal. The secret of England's greatness is her smart diplomacy; and in this affair you have, Crawford, every chance of distinction.'

'You may rely upon me to do my very best to fulfil this important appointment to your satisfaction,' I replied. 'I will act with care and discretion.'

'Act with that caution combined with dignity, as though you were directly serving Her Majesty herself. Remember, I am only her servant.'

'And to you is due our peace with honour,' I remarked.

'No, no,' he laughed, depreciatingly. 'True, I am the figurehead; but it is men such as you who man the ship. No Secretary has been more fortunate in his staff than I am to-day, for I am vain enough to think that although they are scattered in all quarters of the globe, yet a cordiality exists among them which is quite as strong as their patriotism. I am proud to think that in all our embassies and ministries we have no traitor.'

'The *esprit de corps* has been engendered by your lordship's personal interest in us, one and all,' I remarked. 'It was not so during the late Ministry.'

He merely raised his gray eyebrows and tapped the edge of the table with the quill in his thin, bony hand. I knew that I had made a mistake in uttering that sentence, for he did not like ill things said of his political opponents.

'Ten years ago, Crawford,' he said, after a few moments' reflection—'it was just ten years ago, this month, if my memory serves me aright, that, in this very room, I first made your acquaintance—you, the son of one of the most trusted and valued men who ever served his Queen at a foreign Court, followed your father's footsteps, and entered the Foreign Office. You remember the advice and maxim I then gave you. That you have remembered them is evidenced by the discretion and ingenuity you have displayed in the various posts you have since occupied. I only ask you still to recollect them while performing the difficult and important duties before you—duties in which I wish you every success and good fortune.'

Then his lordship rose, a sign that our conference was at an end. He shook my hand warmly with that cordiality which endeared him to every member of the Foreign Office staff; and, simultaneously with the re-entry of Manton, his private secretary, who had been dismissed while we had talked, I went out and down the grand staircase—that magnificent flight of stairs up which representatives of every country in the world climbed to have audience of the gray-haired, refined statesman whom Bismarck once referred to as 'the ruler of Europe.' The most tactful, alert, far-seeing Foreign Minister that England had had during the present century, to him was due the extension of the British Empire in all parts of the world during recent years, notably the acquisition of new countries in Africa, with their untold mineral wealth, the occupation of Egypt, the firm policy in the Soudan, and the clever checkmating of Russia in the Far East. To his intimates he was mild-mannered, soft-voiced, and essentially a pleasant man; but to those highly ingenious and unscrupulous diplomats of the Powers who were ever striving to undermine England's prestige he was so dry, hard, and matter-of-fact that they

feared him, and dreaded entering his presence, because in argument they were invariably worsted, while if they attempted diplomacy they were very quickly confounded.

Upon the Marquess of Macclesfield's tact and far-sightedness depended the prosperity of England, the lives of her millions, and the peace of Europe. A single stroke of the pen, a hasty or ill-advised action, and a war might result which would cost our Empire millions in money and millions of valuable lives; an ill-worded note might, he knew, cause England's prestige to be wrecked, and thus precipitate her from her present proud position of first among the great nations of the world. Truly his position was no enviable one, and his salary of five thousand a year inadequate for the eternal anxiety ever upon him day and night for the preservation of his country's greatness and the honour of his sovereign. Restless, whether at his country-seat down in Hampshire or at his town house in Grosvenor Square, he lived ever at the end of a telegraph-wire which brought him hour by hour information or inquiries from the various embassies abroad, all of which demanded his personal attention and reply. In the dead of night, Paterson, his faithful valet, would awaken him and hand him one of those red despatch-boxes with which a foreign service messenger had posted across Europe from Vienna, Constantinople, Berlin, or St Petersburg, in order to deliver it with all possible speed. Indeed, in such a life of terrible brain-tear it was not surprising that the years of statesmanship had aged him prematurely, that his eyes were sunken, that he had developed a restless, nervous habit of pacing the room while talking, or that insomnia would frequently seize him, and at such times he would go forth in the dead of night into the deserted streets of London and walk miles and miles for recreation. For the faithful discharge of his difficult duties he had received many times the personal thanks of Her Majesty; but, truth to tell, it was the applause and the cries of 'Good old Macclesfield!' which fell spontaneously from the lips of those monster audiences he at rare intervals addressed in Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, and other provincial centres, that pleased him most of all. He had been heard to say that those hearty ringing cheers which greeted him when he rose to speak, and again when he repeated himself, were, in themselves, sufficient repayment for the constant and terrible strain ever upon him.

At the foot of the great staircase, just as I was passing out into the courtyard, wherein the lamps were already lit, as the short day had ended and the yellow twilight was fast fading into night, a cheery voice behind me exclaimed:

'What! Crawford? Is that you, old chap, back from Constant?'

I turned quickly, and saw before me a tall, slim figure in overcoat and silk hat, whom I

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recognised as my old friend and whilom colleague, Gordon Clunes, of the Treaty Department, a dark-haired, spruce, easy-going fellow with whom I had lived in chambers in the Albany eight years ago, before being nominated attaché.

'By Jove, Gordon!' I cried, grasping his hand, 'I thought you always went at three, so I meant to look in and see you to-morrow.'

'Busy, old chap,' he laughed in explanation. 'But why are you home? What's occurred?'

'I was recalled by the chief,' I answered.

'Recalled? Nothing wrong, I hope?'

'Not at all. I'm appointed to Brussels,' I laughed.

'To Brussels!' he echoed in a strange tone of surprise, I thought. Then, for a few moments, he was silent in contemplation.

'Yes; but why are you surprised?' I inquired, puzzled. It seemed as though he begrudged me my advancement.

'It will be a pleasant change for you,' he responded, with that air of irresponsibility I had known so well in the old days. 'Brussels is a much better post than Constantinople, and only a few hours from London. Why, Henky, when he was attaché there, used to keep on his rooms in London and run over about once a fortnight—sometimes oftener.'

'Poor Henky wasn't very remarkable for his attention to duty,' I laughed, remembering how, when he was attaché with me at Vienna, he used often to receive a mild reprimand from the ambassador. But the Honourable Alfred Heniker was a merry Guardsman and such a renowned lady-killer that we at the embassy nicknamed him 'The Fly-Paper,' because all the girls stuck to him.

Brussels was, as my friend Clunes had pointed out, a much more desirable diplomatic post than Constantinople, where society is so mixed, and where leave is almost unobtainable.

'When do you go?' my friend inquired.

I told him that it was uncertain, and that, having only arrived from Turkey the night before, after an absence of eighteen months, I hoped to get a few weeks' leave in England. I was staying with a maiden aunt, a very prim and proper old lady, who lived in Warwick Gardens, Kensington, and who had long ago given me to understand that in the event of her decease I should fall in for a very fair share of this world's goods. Therefore, as diplomacy is an expensive profession, and, further, as my income was a decidedly limited one, I felt in duty bound to pay the old lady a visit whenever I came to town; while, on her part, she seemed to be proud of talking to her friends of the advancement and success of her 'nephew in the diplomatic service.'

As we walked together along Downing Street, gloomy and deserted save for the solitary detective

on guard against anarchist outrages, who wished us 'Good-evening, gentlemen,' as we passed, we spoke of mutual friends, and I referred to his own recent marriage, which I had seen announced in the papers.

'Yes,' he laughed. 'Couldn't stand bachelor life any longer, my dear fellow; so, having let our old chambers, I took a wife, and am now settled down as a respectable citizen. I live at Richmond. Come down and dine to-morrow night. My wife will be delighted to meet you. I've told her long ago of our *ménage*, and of the five years we spent together. Those were merry days—weren't they—eh?'

'Yes,' I replied, smiling at some amusing remembrances which at that moment crossed my mind, 'they were. Thank you for your invitation. I'll be pleased to come.'

'Then here's a card,' he said. 'You'll easily find the house; it's one of those new ones on the way up to the Terrace Gardens. But I must take this cab to Waterloo, or I shan't catch my train. Good-bye till to-morrow, old fellow;' and, with a cordial hand-grip, he sprang into a hansom, while I, full of thoughts of my new appointment, turned and strolled on towards that centre whither all diplomats drift, the St James's Club in Piccadilly.

Glad of an opportunity to escape from the terrible formality of dining at my aunt's, where old Batson waited upon one with the air of a funeral mute, I dressed next evening and took train to Richmond, where I had no difficulty in finding Gordon's place, a large new house about half-way up Richmond Hill. It was a decidedly pleasant place, built in artistic Early English style, the interior being mostly decorated in dead white, with a square hall and oak staircase, and rooms with high oak wainscoting and wrought-iron electric-light brackets. In the hall, where he welcomed me, a fire burned brightly; and in his little den beyond, with its high-backed antique chairs, everything was decidedly cosy. Indeed, I envied him, and remarked upon the perfectly artistic arrangement of his abode.

'Yes,' he laughed. 'It was my wife's fancy to have a house like this. She is fond of having things different from other people—a woman's weakness for the distinct, I suppose.'

My train had brought me there about a quarter of an hour too early; therefore, when I had removed my coat, we sat chatting in my old friend's little study, lounging lazily before the fire, and enjoying a quiet few minutes.

'By Jove!' Gordon exclaimed after a pause, 'it is really a stroke of good fortune, old fellow, to be appointed to Brussels. The chief has indeed been generous. I only wish I could get a post abroad; but somehow I'm always passed over.'

'Why, surely you don't want to give this up?' I said. 'How long have you been here?'

'About a year.'

'And yet you want to go abroad!' I said. 'I tell you, Gordon, you wouldn't be half so happy, living in a foreign town, with your wife perhaps snubbed by some of the women to whom you have, for diplomatic purposes, to be nice. It's all very well to be an attaché while you're a bachelor; but afterwards—well, the thing's impossible.'

'And you've had a rattling good time of it—eh?' he asked, smiling.

'Well, on the whole, yes,' I responded.

'At any rate you've earned distinction, and I congratulate you,' he said earnestly. He was a good fellow, one of my best friends, and I had always kept up a weekly or fortnightly correspondence with him ever since I had been appointed abroad. The post he held was one of greatest trust. Indeed, perhaps no one in the whole Department of Foreign Affairs, excepting the Minister himself, knew so many secrets of State as did Gordon Clunes. He was a free, merry, open-hearted fellow, but was discretion itself. With regard to those secret drafts which daily passed through his hands, and were seen by no other eyes than those of Lord Macclesfield, he was a veritable sphinx. There are a good many drones in the Foreign Office hive; but Gordon was by no means an idler. I had often regretted that he had not been appointed to one of the embassies; but it seemed as though the Marquess reposed such perfect confidence in him that his presence at headquarters was much more valuable.

'I know I have your best wishes, old chap,' I remarked. 'And I believe that Brussels is a very pleasant embassy. Lots of life, and within easy distance of London.'

'My dear fellow, Dick Crouch, who was nominated there three years ago, once told me that it was gayer than Vienna. Old Drummond is a brick, and you can get leave almost at any time. When Crouch couldn't get it he used to bring over despatches, and save the messenger a journey.'

'Perhaps I can do the same,' I said.

'No doubt you will,' he replied. 'The chief was talking with the Permanent Secretary in my room to-day, and mentioned that you had been appointed on secret service. You didn't tell me so.'

'I really didn't think it necessary,' I said, slightly annoyed. 'I understood from the chief that this fact was entirely between ourselves. Truth to tell, I don't like the expression secret service.'

'Savours too much of spy—doesn't it, old fellow?' he laughed. 'But,' he added, 'that's the very essence of diplomacy. The successful diplomat is the man who keeps his weather-eye constantly open upon his opponents' doings, and presents elaborate reports to headquarters. Isn't every ambassador a spy, more or less?'

'Certainly,' I responded. 'But I'm not an ambassador yet.'

'But you're a deal more shrewd than some of the old fossils who potter over trifles, and send long screeds to the chief over every vice-consul's worry.'

'Then you think I'll make a good spy?' I asked, laughing.

'My dear old fellow,' he said, clapping me on the back as he rose, 'there are few of those blanked foreigners who'll be able to get the better of you. The way in which you got at that secret in Vienna is sufficient proof of that.'

'How did you know?' I inquired, starting in surprise that he should be aware of a matter which I fully believed was private between Lord Macclesfield and myself.

'By the alteration in the treaty,' my friend responded promptly. 'The alteration was in your handwriting, and not in the ambassador's. Your tact and shrewdness in that affair saved us from a very ugly difficulty. 'Of course,' he added confidentially, 'I'm not such a fool as to breathe a single word of it. Not a soul in the office knows that you are on secret service besides myself.'

There was a pause, broken only by the low ticking of the clock.

'And you will preserve my secret?' I said, looking him straight in the face. 'Remember that there are secret agents around us even here, and if the truth of my real position leaked out I should no doubt find all my efforts thwarted. Upon secrecy alone my success depends.'

'I know, Philip,' he replied in deep earnestness. 'You have trusted me before; you can trust me now—can't you?'

'Of course, I know I can,' I answered, reassured; and the strange sense of misgiving which had suddenly crept upon me a few moments before was at once succeeded by a feeling of reassurance in my old friend's fidelity.

Just at that moment the door opened, and my hostess entered, a dainty figure in pale coral, sweet-faced, fair-haired, and wearing a beautiful collar of amethysts and pearls around her white, slender throat. She was not more than twenty-three, graceful, with large expressive eyes of deep blue, and a figure almost perfect in its symmetry.

Gordon introduced me as his 'old friend and fellow-bachelor, Phil;' and as I took the slim white hand she extended our eyes met in a quick glance of recognition. I held a suspicion that I felt her hand tremble in mine. Her face was certainly familiar to me—too familiar; it somehow seemed. Yet try how I would I could not recollect under what conditions, or when or where, we had met. That she, too, had recognised me was also evident; yet her quick and strenuous effort to cover her surprise and confusion was in itself suspicious. In an instant I divined her intention. She had recovered herself with a swiftness



that was marvellous—so quickly, indeed, that her husband had not noticed it, and I saw that if I claimed acquaintance with her she intended to deny it. We had met somewhere under extraordinary conditions, I knew; yet, with tantalising perversity, my memory in this direction was an utter blank. She smiled upon me, yet there was

a hardness about the corners of her mouth which I did not fail to notice; and, standing in the centre of that cosy little room, with her necklet of amethysts glistening in the electric glow, she greeted me with an amiable effusiveness which, by some strange intuition, I knew disguised an intense and bitter hatred.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE SHAKESPEARE MANUSCRIPTS.

By ALEXANDER CARGILL.



F the many problems that have gathered round the subject of Shakespeare and his personal history, none has remained so absolutely without solution as that of the disappearance of the manuscripts written by the poet's own hand. For generations this problem has perplexed all who have taken any genuine interest in Shakespeare's magnificent literary bequest; indeed, the mystery of the lost manuscripts may be truly said to have only increased with the lapse of time. Notwithstanding the most careful investigations by successive explorers in this peculiarly fascinating field of inquiry, the same questions that have been asked for now something like two centuries are still, so far, entirely unanswered: By what extraordinary fatality were these precious manuscripts lost to the world? Have they disappeared for ever? If so, when, where, and by whom were they made away with or destroyed? Or, is it possible that they were buried with the poet's mortal remains in his inviolable place of sepulchre by the chancel of the church of Holy Trinity at Stratford-on-Avon, never again to be seen by human eyes? Such are a few of the questions that must ever recur—until the mystery is solved—to those persons for whom this question, in its intimate connection with the life of one of the most surpassing intellects ever created, will always provide matter for speculation of a most interesting kind.

As the matter stands at the present time, the world of literature is, *mirabile dictu*, absolutely without anything whatsoever in the shape of manuscript from the pen of one of its most original, most elegant, and most voluminous writers. Just imagine, were it placed in the market, the money-value of a letter, or of a paragraph or sentence, or even a single line, of genuine 'copy' written by the veritable hand that penned the immortal *Hamlet*! Why, that value cannot for a moment be reckoned, even when compared with the fabulous sums that are nowadays paid for the manuscripts of writers who are not, intellectually, worthy to tie his shoe-latchet! Not a line, however, not a phrase,

not a word even, that can be proved beyond dispute to have been penned by Shakespeare's own hand is known to exist anywhere in the world. 'A blank, my lord; all—a blank!' is the upshot of the whole matter, thus supplying one of the most remarkable instances on record of the strange caprice of Destiny in dealing with the affairs of men. 'It is true' that there are still extant several sad specimens of the poet's signature—those, for example, appended to his Last Will and Testament, scrawled, in all probability, when his physical force was fast ebbing, and when his signature became a matter of urgent legal necessity. But with the exception of these deathbed mementos, and also excluding his two signatures on the Blackfriars Estate deeds, and his autograph on the title-page of Florio's Montaigne in the British Museum—assuming it to be the autograph of Shakespeare—there is not at the present time to be found anywhere in the world a single stroke of his immortal pen for his admirers to look upon.

How, it may well be asked, did such a literary cataclysm as this ever come to pass? That, of a body of manuscripts, subsequently imprinted in book form, almost rivalling in material bulk our English Bible, and—may it not be said?—approaching it, nearest of all human writings, in respect of beauty of thought and magnificence of language, not a vestige in any shape or form should survive to-day, is one of the most extraordinary facts in the history of English literature. And, moreover, when the comparative recentness of the period of the Shakespeare manuscripts is taken into account, the fact seems all the more bewildering and inexplicable. Nothing, surely, could be more fitly designed to give complexion to the theories that have, from time to time during recent years, been devised to prove that the authorship of the plays belongs, not to Shakespeare, but to some other man of genius, than the mystery of the lost manuscripts. When, however, certain circumstances connected with the life of Shakespeare, so far as that is definitely known, and with the times in which he lived, are duly

considered and their significance adequately appreciated in pondering this interesting literary problem, it may not, after all, be so very much of a mystery as it appears.

In the first place, we must try to realise something of the dangers by which the manuscripts were beset, and therefore of their chances of survival even beyond the limit of the poet's own day and generation. For instance, the age was utterly regardless of the value—supposing there was a value—of the manuscript works of its writers, and certainly had no means of appraising it. The innovation of the arts of printing and book-making, in the modern sense, was then comparatively recent. Once 'imprinted,' the manuscripts were more often regarded as worthless, and fit only to be destroyed, than deserving of special preservation. For the caligraphy of the time was, for the most part, elementary, crude, and inelegant. Fine or fluent penmanship was a practically rare acquirement. Many otherwise well-educated persons could do little more in the matter of penmanship than write their names. Even in the highest social circles signature by cross-mark was by no means an uncommon thing. Judging—if it be fair to do so—from the extant specimens of his own signature, Shakespeare himself would appear to have been but an indifferent penman; and not for many years after the Shakespearian period could it be said of the handwriting of men of even outstanding literary gifts that it was, according to any rate to present-day standards, commensurate or even satisfactory. Obviously, the opportunities for, and aids to, good penmanship some three centuries ago were alike meagre and inadequate. Indeed, in ordinary communities of people few persons could use the quill to much purpose, excepting, perhaps, justices of the peace and attorneys, or scriveners, and those in their employment. Shakespeare has, among other occupations that have variously been ascribed to him, been accused of having himself plied the quill as an attorney's apprentice. One has only to glance at his signature to the Blackfriars Estate deeds to give that story its *quietus* once and for all. When the Ireland forgeries were being swallowed down wholesale by the gullible English public of a century ago, no one thought for a moment of applying so simple a test as this signature—ready to hand as it was—by which that foolish youth might easily have been brought to book for his audacious knavery. Keeping all this in view, therefore, it is not difficult to understand how, in Shakespeare's day, the manuscript writings of men even famous among their contemporaries would be lightly regarded and set aside after these writings had been printed and circulated in book or pamphlet form. But in Shakespeare's case the great body of his writings—namely, the Plays—were not published till some years after his death, so that it is permissible

to suppose that, at least, the major portion of the manuscripts were extant in 1623, or seven years after the poet's death; or, how else did his friends Heminge and Condell accomplish their great editorial undertaking in that year? Assuming Heminge and Condell to have edited from the manuscripts—or, at all events, from certain of them—it is not too far-fetched a theory, and it has been suggested before now, to attach to them whatever blame there may be for the subsequent loss of the manuscripts. Yet to no two men does the world of literature owe a deeper debt of gratitude than to these fellow-players of Shakespeare for what they did in conserving and publishing his works, though seven years after he had departed—not a day too soon!

Secondly, it is to be remembered that it is sometimes a characteristic of transcendent genius to belittle its own creations. With Shakespeare this appears, so far as is known, to have been the case in an eminent degree. In his Last Will and Testament—an all-important document in considering this subject—there is not a hint of anything having reference to his writings. His bequests are numerous and varied, but nothing in the shape of literary matter is even suggested. Why this indifference of Shakespeare to the fate of the many and glorious 'heirs of his invention'? Had he previously sold all these to Philip Henslowe, the actor-manager of the famous Globe Theatre, where so many of the plays were first brought out? If not, did Shakespeare consider them to be of such little account as to be unworthy of a scrawl of the scrivener's quill when making up the inventory of his various bequests? Such, indeed, would appear to have been the case; and while it is borne out from internal evidence that the Last Will and Testament was a matter of sudden and serious urgency, though containing many trivial details as to his bequests, the omission of all mention whatsoever to his work of authorship is a fact of strange significance. From what we know of Shakespeare's prudential character in the matter of pounds, shillings, and pence, it is not too much out of the way to suggest that by the year 1616 he had already sold all his plays to Philip Henslowe, so that, his pecuniary interest in them having ceased, he could not bequeath a property which he had parted with to another, and, we may shrewdly surmise, for a worthy consideration. What, therefore, of Henslowe's connection with the manuscripts, supposing he became the purchaser of them?

Before answering this question, however, a third reason in accounting for the disappearance of the manuscripts may be advanced at this stage of the inquiry—namely, Shakespeare's frequent absences from London. These absences would certainly tend to jeopardise their safety, if his manuscripts were left behind either at his lodgings or at the theatre with which he was connected. Probably there was no great English highway more frequented by

Shakespeare than that between the Metropolis and Stratford-on-Avon. It is, of course, unknown how often he journeyed first and last between the two places, at the latter of which lived his wife and family and other relatives, whom no doubt it was his desire to visit as frequently as the exigencies of his actor-calling would permit. But not a single by-the-way incident of these journeys is on record. We only know that the occasion of one of the home visits had to do with the purchase of property there, while another was connected with a sad domestic bereavement—namely, the death of his son Hamnet. Apart, however, from these purely private journeys between London and Stratford-on-Avon, Shakespeare, in fulfilment of his professional engagements, must unquestionably have travelled extensively from time to time. In Sonnet No. 110 the reference to his wanderings in that capacity is unmistakable:

Alas! 'tis true, I have gone here and there,  
And made myself a motley to the view.

But what were the precise extent and circumstances of his travels with his 'fellows' will never be known. Not a few biographers have ventured to map out certain lines or routes of travel over which, they say, the poet-player *must* have passed in the course of his career. Italy, for example, declares one writer, he must have visited frequently, since not a few of the plays have all the brilliant sparkle and glamour of the sunny South! Scotland, too, declares another biographer, must assuredly, on one occasion at all events, have been honoured by a visit from Shakespeare and his companions of the sock and buskin; otherwise, how could the tragedy of *Macbeth* have been written? It is quite within the bounds of possibility that he visited not only Scotland and Italy, but also Denmark; but unfortunately there is no evidence extant to show that he actually did so. And to infer that, because the genius of the dramatist has saturated certain of his plays with a natural local colouring, the writer himself must have made a personal pilgrimage to the scenes of the plays, is to draw 'imaginary lines' with a vengeance. The late Mr Halliwell-Phillipps was, I am aware, a firm believer in the theory, as supplied by supposed internal evidence of the plays, that Shakespeare must have visited not a few foreign countries some time between his thirtieth and forty-eighth year of age; and, in a letter to myself, Mr Halliwell-Phillipps some years ago strongly urged me to make a search among certain ancient municipal documents, which he indicated, with the view of finding traces of the poet's wanderings north of the Tweed. For *vid* Edinburgh, Perth, and Aberdeen, Shakespeare must, in the opinion of that redoubtable biographer, have 'strolled' with the 'Earl of Leicester's

servantes.' To that interesting task of discovery I have not yet addressed myself, since a preliminary 'prospecting' adventure in quest of the classic gold proved to be somewhat discouraging. But whether or not the journeyings of Shakespeare from London included trips to North Britain, or farther afield to Denmark, France, and Italy, there is no doubt that his absence from London from time to time subjected whatever of his manuscripts he left behind him in his reputed lodgings near by the Bear's Garden at Southwark, or in the repositories of the Globe Theatre, in whose fortunes he had a considerable personal interest, to obvious risks of loss, if not of actual destruction.

And the mention in this connection of the famous Globe Theatre suggests, fourthly and finally, the chief accident by which, in the total destruction of that theatre by fire in 1613, many of the Shakespeare manuscripts were in all probability destroyed. By that deplorable disaster, a really tangible reason, accounting for the disappearance of these writings, may not unreasonably be offered. So far as the few extant records of the fire may be relied on, the calamity befell on a certain day in the month of August in the year named, and when a rehearsal of *Henry the Eighth*, which Shakespeare is supposed to have written (partly at least) a short time previously, was in progress. The cause of the fire is unknown, although a contemporary writer alleged it to have been occasioned by some gunpowder used 'in the firing of cannons in displaying the pomp and circumstance of that grand spectacular play.' Be that as it may, the wooden erection was soon ablaze and destroyed with everything it contained. It is not known if any lives were lost; but surely it is not too much to surmise that in this conflagration many of the manuscripts of the actor-poet perished for ever. This, let it be remembered, was the theatre where his plays were, at that period, originally staged. In its fortunes Shakespeare himself had a considerable interest. Philip Henslowe was its acting-manager, and to him initially Shakespeare made over the copyright of his plays, as these were written, for certain sums of money, with which he was enabled to establish himself a proprietor of houses in New Place and elsewhere at Stratford-on-Avon. What more likely, therefore, than that Henslowe had many of these manuscript plays in his possession when the disaster of August 1613 befell? If this theory be set aside, is there another and a better to account for their loss?

The tempest shatters and the flood defiles,  
But fire, with ever-ravaging rage, devours,  
And, like a fierce and famished beast, licks up  
The last and veriest fragment of the wrack!

## YOU SING.

By F. T. BULLEN, Author of *The Cruise of the Cachalot*.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.



REGARDED collectively, the Chinese may safely be classified under the head of unpleasant races. Most people who have had personal dealings with them will doubtless admit that, while there are to be discovered among them a tiny sprinkling of really decent men and women, taken 'by and large' they are, to Westerns at any rate, anathema. And yet, when due allowance is made for environment, and for hereditary peculiarities of many strange kinds—for which, of course, the individual is in no way responsible—it may not be too bold an assertion that the Chinese are a people who only need a little real leadership on Western lines to become a truly great nation. They possess all the necessary qualifications for such a splendid future and few of the drawbacks. Many virtues that are among us only inculcated by much laborious tuition are with the Chinese *sui generis*. No one will deny that they know how to die; were it possible to teach them how to live, such a revolution would be felt in the progress of the world as it has never yet witnessed. Of course, this does not touch the vast question as to whether such a resurrection of China is to be welcomed or dreaded.

But my intention in these pages is far from that of discussing the economic future of China. Such a task would be indefinitely beyond my powers, besides being utterly unnecessary and out of place here. Besides, I do not really feel sufficiently interested in the Chinese collectively. My story is about a single Chinaman who played a very important part in my own history, and who well deserved a far more powerful testimony than any I am able to bear to his virtues.

But, first, in order to launch my story properly, I must premise that in one of my vagrom voyages, while I was only a puny lad of thirteen, I was flung ashore in Liverpool, penniless, and, of course, friendless. For many days I lived—or, rather, I did not die—by picking up, bird-like, such unvalued trifles of food as chance threw in my way while I wandered about the docks; but as there were many more experienced urchins with sharper eyes than mine on the same keen quest, it may be well imagined that I did not wax overfat upon my findings. Unfortunately my seafaring instincts kept me near the docks at all times, where most of my associates were as hunger-bitten as myself; had I gone up town I should probably have fared better.

However, I had put a very keen edge indeed upon my appetite one bitter November afternoon, when, prowling along the Coburg Dock Quay, I was suddenly brought up 'all standing' by a most maddening smell of soup. With dilated

nostrils I drew in the fragrant breeze, and immediately located its source as the galley of a barque that lay near, loading. I must have looked hungry as I swiftly came alongside of her, for the broad-faced cook, who was standing at his galley-door swabbing his steaming face after his sultry sojourn within, presently caught sight of me and lifted a beckoning finger. I was by his side in two bounds, and before I had quite realised my good fortune I was loading up at a great rate from a comfortably-sized dish of plum soup. My benefactor said nothing as the eager spoonfuls passed, but lolled against the door placidly regarding me with much the same expression as one would a hungry dog with a just-discovered bone. When at last I was well distended he asked me a few questions in a queer broken English that I immediately recognised as the German version. What was I? Where did I come from? Would I like to go to sea? And so on. Eagerly and hopefully I answered him, much to his amazement; for, like every other seaman I fell in with in those days, he found it hard to believe that I had already been nearly two years at sea, so small and weak did I appear. But the upshot of our interview was that he introduced me to the skipper, a burly North German, who, looking stolidly down upon me, between the regular puffs of smoke from his big pipe, said:

'Vell, poy; ju dinks ju like du komm in a Cherman sheep—hein?'

I faltered out a few words, not very coherently, I am afraid, for the prospect of getting any ship at all was just like a glimpse of heaven to me. Fortunately for my hopes, Captain Strauss was a man of action, so, cutting short my faltering reply, he resumed: 'All right. Ve yoost loosed a leedle Engelsch boy lige you. He pin mit me more as ein jeer, gabin-poy, und mein vife lige him fery vell. Ju do so goot as him, you vas all right. Vat ju call jorselluf—hein?'

'Tom, sir,' I answered promptly.

'Ya; den ve calls you Dahn. Dat oder poy ve calls Dahn, und so ju gomes all der same for him—aind id?'

That seemed to settle the matter, for he turned away abruptly and was gone. I hastened to my friend the cook, and told him what the skipper had said, with the result that in another five minutes I was busy laying the cloth for dinner in the cabin as if I had been the original Dan just come back. A pretty, fair-haired little girl of about ten years of age watched me curiously from a state-room door with the frank straightforward curiosity of a child; and I, boy-like, was on my mettle to show her how well I could do my work. Presently she came forward and spoke



to me; but her remarks being in German, I could only smile feebly and look foolish; whereupon she indignantly snapped out, '*Schaafskopf*,' and ran away. She returned almost directly with her mother, a buxom, placid-looking dame of about thirty-five, who addressed me in a dignified tone. Again I was in a hole, for she spoke only German also; and if ever a poor urchin felt nonplussed, I did. This drawback made my berth an uncomfortable one at first; but, with such opportunities as I had, and such a powerful inducement to spur me on, I soon picked up enough to understand what was said to me, and to make some suitable reply.

The vessel was a smart-looking, well-found barque of about six hundred tons, called the *Blitzen* of Rostock, and carried a crew of fourteen all told. Each of the other thirteen was a master of mine, and seldom allowed an opportunity to slip of asserting his authority; while the skipper's wife and daughter evidently believed that I ought to be perpetually in motion. Consequently my berth was no sinecure; and, whatever my qualifications may have been, I have no doubt I earned my food and the tiny triangular lair under the companion-ladder wherein I crept—I was going to say when my work was done—but a rather better term to use would be, in the short intervals between jobs.

Now, the story of the next nine months on board the *Blitzen* is by no means devoid of interest; but I have an uneasy feeling that I have already tried the reader's patience enough with necessary preliminaries to the story of You Sing. After calling at several ports in South America, looking in at Alagoa Bay, visiting Banjawangie and Cheribon, we finally appeared to have settled down as a Chinese coaster, trading between all sorts of out-of-the-way ports for native consignees, and carrying a queer assortment of merchandise. Finally we found ourselves at Amoy under charter for Ilo-Ilo with a full cargo of Chinese 'notions.' Owing, I suppose, to the docility of the German crew, and the high state of discipline maintained on board, we still carried the same crew that we left England with; but I must say that, while I admired the good seamanship displayed by the skipper and his officers, I was heartily weary of my lot on board. I had never become a favourite, not even with the little girl, who seemed to take a delight in imitating her father and mother by calling me strange-sounding Teutonic names of opprobrium; and I was beaten regularly, not apparently from any innate brutality, but from sheer force of habit, as a London costermonger beats his faithful donkey. The only thing that made life at all tolerable was that I was fairly well fed and enjoyed robust health; while I never lost the hope that in some of our wanderings we should happen into an English port, where I might be able to run away. That blissful idea I kept steadily before me as a beacon-light to cheer me on. Happily, dread of losing my wages in such an event did not trouble me,

because I had none to lose as far as I knew; I did not stipulate for any when I joined.

It was on a lovely night that we swung clear of Amoy harbour and, catching a light land-breeze, headed across the strait towards Formosa. Many fishing sampans were dotted about the sleeping sea, making little sepia-splashes on the wide white wake of the moon. Little care was taken to avoid running them down; nor did they seem to feel any great anxiety as to whether we did so or not, and as a consequence we occasionally grazed closely past one, and looked down curiously upon the passive figures sitting in their frail craft like roosting sea-birds upon a floating log. Without any actual damage to them, we gradually drew clear of their cruising-ground, and, hauling to the southward a little, stood gently onward for Cape South, the wind still very light and the weather perfect. But suddenly we ran into a strange heavy mist that obscured all the sea around us, and yet did not have that wetness that usually characterises the clinging vapour of the sea-fog. Through this opaque veil we glided as if sailing in cloudland, a silence enwrapping us as if we had been mysteriously changed into a ghostly ship and crew. Then a quick strong blast of wind burst out of the brume right ahead, throwing all the sails aback and driving the vessel stern foremost at a rate that seemed out of all proportion to its force.

For a few moments the watch on deck appeared to be stupid with surprise. Then the skipper, roused by the unusual motion, rushed on deck, and his deep, guttural voice broke the spell as he issued abrupt orders. All hands were soon busy getting the vessel under control, shortening sail and trimming yards. But, to everybody's speechless amazement, it was presently found that entangled alongside lay a small junk, a craft of some twenty to thirty tons, upon whose deck no sign of life was visible. All hands crowded to the rail, staring and muttering almost incoherent comment upon this weird visitor that had so suddenly arisen, as it were, out of the void. As usual, the skipper first recovered his working wits, and ordered a couple of the men to jump on board the junk and investigate. They obeyed unquestioningly, as was their wont, and presently reported that she was unmanned, but apparently full to the hatches of assorted Chinese cargo in mats and boxes. The skipper's voice took an exultant ring as he ordered the vessel to be well secured alongside, and her contents to be transferred on board of us with all possible despatch. Meanwhile the strange mist had vanished as suddenly as it had arisen, and the full bright moon shone down upon the toiling men, who with wonderful celerity were breaking out the junk's cargo and hurling it on to our decks. Such was their expedition that in half-an-hour our decks were almost impassable for the queer-looking boxes and bales and bundles of all shapes disgorged from the junk's hold.

Then they invaded the evil-scented cabin, and ransacked its many hiding-places, finding numerous neatly-bound parcels wrapped in fine silky matting. And, last of all—they declared he must have suddenly been materialised, or words to that effect—they lighted upon a lad of probably sixteen years of age. He showed no surprise, after the fatalistic fashion of his countrymen, but stood gravely before them like some quaint Mongolian idol carved out of yellow jade, and ready for any fortune that might await him. With scant ceremony, he too was man-handled on deck, for the command was urgent to finish the work; the busy labourers followed him, and the junk was cast adrift.

Some sort of rough stowage was made of the treasure-trove thus peculiarly shipped; and, the excitement that had sustained their unusual exertions having subsided, the tired crew flung themselves down anywhere and slept—slept like dead men, all except the officer of the watch and the helmsman. They had at first little to do that might keep them from slumber, for the wind had dropped to a stark calm, which in those sheltered waters, remote from the disturbing influence of any great ocean swell, left the ship almost perfectly motionless, a huge silhouette against the glowing surface of a silver lake. But presently it dawned upon the mate who was in charge of the deck, that although the vessel had certainly not travelled more than a mile since the junk was cast adrift, that strange craft was nowhere to be seen; and, stern martinet though he was, the consciousness of something uncanny about the recent business stole through him, shrinking his skin and making his mouth dry, until for relief he sought the helmsman and entered into conversation with him on the subject. That worthy, a stolid unemotional Dutchman named Pfeiffer, scanned the whole of the palpitating brightness around before he would assent to the mate's theory of any sudden disappearance of our late companion; but, having done so and failed to discover the smallest speck against that dazzling surface, he too was fain to admit that the thing was not comforting. Right glad were those two men when the interminably long watch was over, and the sharp business-like notes of the bell seemed to dissipate in some measure the chilling

atmosphere of mystery that hemmed them in. To the second mate the retiring officer said nothing of his fears, but hastened below, hurriedly scratched a perfunctory note or two on the log-slate, and bundled, 'all standing'—that is, dressed as he was—into his bunk, pulling the upper feather-bed right over his head, as if to shut out the terror that was upon him. Slowly the remainder of the night passed away; but when at last the tiny suggestion of paleness along the eastern horizon gave the first indication of the day's approach, no change, not even the slightest, had occurred to increase the mystery whose environment all felt more or less keenly. As the advancing glory of the new day displaced the deep purple of the night, the awakening crew recalled, as if it had been a lifetime ago, the strange happening of the past few hours. But it was not until the clear light was fully come that the significance of the whole affair was manifest. For there, seated upon a mat-bound case, stamped all over with red 'chops,' was the Chinese youth, whose existence had up till now been unnoticed from the time he was first bundled on board. Impassive as a wooden image, he looked as if the position he had held throughout the night had left him unwearied, and to all appearance the strange and sudden change in his environment possessed for him no significance whatever. But now, when the surly-looking mate approached him and looked him over with evident distaste, he slid off his perch, and, kneeling at the officer's feet, kissed the deck thrice in manifest token of his entire submission to whatever fate might be dealt out to him. The mate stood silently looking down upon him as if hardly able to decide what to do with him. While this curious little episode was being enacted the skipper appeared, and, hastening to the mate's side, addressed the grovelling Celestial in what he supposed to be the only possible medium of communication—'pidgin' English, which, coupled to a German accent, was the queerest jargon conceivable.

'Vell,' he said, 'vot pelong you pidgin—hay? You savvy work, one dime?'

Lifting his yellow mask of a face, but still remaining on his knees, the waif made answer:

'No shabee. You Sing.'

## COTTON-SEED OIL AS USED AND ABUSED.



HE outcome of the parliamentary discussion on margarine will probably result in some protection for the consumer's pocket and the restricted production of a valuable food for the poor. Protective legislation has, however, taken but little cognisance of the reasons why margarine too fre-

quently transgresses the requirements of a healthful food; and, while providing that it shall not emerge from the factory as anything but what it is, does nothing to make it all that it should be.

The advantages of a liberal proportion of fat in the daily dietary are now too well known to be dwelt upon; and cotton-seed oil,

by reason of the superabundance of the supply, contributes largely to meet this demand. The oil, *per se*, enters into the composition of the cheaper grades of margarine; and under what forms it may be found in those of the highest price is a point for the analyst to decide. The intrinsic merits of this oil as a food being exceptionally great, the consumers of it may be interested to know why it is so often found to play an objectionable rôle in dietetic economy, since these consumers are more numerous than they know themselves to be, as the following facts may disclose.

'Where does the cotton-oil go?' was recently asked. The United States produce and export it in largest quantity; but Egypt, India, China, and Brazil also send a considerable amount into the market. The extent and the various guises under which the oil travels may be realised from a study of sundry trade statistics. Chicago, St Louis, Kansas City, and Omaha make large demands on it for conversion into lard, with the aid of beef-suet, and often without assistance from the hog. Nearly an equal portion is shipped to Rotterdam to be transformed into margarine. The packing of sardines on the coast of Maine and on the Continent claims large consignments; and at Marseilles, Trieste, and various points on the Mediterranean coast considerable quantities are manipulated in the manufacture of 'pure' olive-oil. The makers of toilet soaps find use for the remainder.

Therefore, the greater part of all the cotton-oil produced finds its way in various forms to the table; and it is to be hoped that, both for domestic and pharmaceutical purposes, a just recognition of its great merits may soon be realised. The innate capability for easy assimilation, and the sweet nutty flavour of the oil when chemically pure, together with its non-nauseating and non-laxative properties, render it far preferable to cod-liver oil for invalids and children; and there are many forms in which it could be made a mine of wealth in food-stuffs for the poorer classes.

The usual methods of refining are responsible for curtailing its usefulness in these directions. American refiners possess the secret of producing a clear oil of sweet flavour and neutral to the litmus test; and this finds its way to wholesale purchasers branded with various fancy names. The price of this prime quality, however, is so high that margarine manufactured from it has to compete more and more closely with cheap imported butter. To meet commercial exigencies, therefore, the article made from it must be sold, when possible, as pure butter; or cheaper grades of margarine be made from oils not only imperfectly cleansed from their own impurities, but retaining traces of the chemical reagents with which they are refined, and on this account are they detrimental to health. The

nature and effect of these reagents will be best understood from a survey of the commercial handling to which cotton-seed is subjected *ab initio*.

The seed being by nature entangled in the wool, the two are separated by a mechanical process called 'ginning.' The seed consists of a gray farinaceous kernel, enveloped in a hard black hull. This kernel is of a complex nature; and is composed of starchy, albuminoid, mucilaginous, and colouring matters, with sugar and oil. Being a rich source of flesh-formers, it is a valuable food for cattle; the hulls, on the contrary, are valueless for nutrition, and discomforting to the digestive organs.

The seed is crushed by machinery, and afterwards pressed for the extraction of its oil; the Egyptian seed giving the largest proportion and the lightest-coloured oil. The farinaceous cake left after the oil is expressed is used in stock-raising, and has proved itself by practical experience and recent scientific tests to be the most advantageous of feeding-stuffs. When the seed has not been deprived of its hulls by decortication before being crushed, the hulls pass into the cake, to the deterioration of its nutritive value. In England and Scotland, where Egyptian cotton-seed is exclusively used for making oil, the pressed cake almost invariably contains these hulls.

Some few American crushers, who decorticate the seed before pressing out the oil, demand a proportionately high price for their cake. Owing to troublesome manipulations and the expense of the requisite plant, the practice of decortication has not become general. As, however, the cake gains from forty to fifty per cent. in nourishing efficiency, and loses all of its objectionable qualities, when free of the hulls, it is satisfactory to know that a simple and inexpensive method of removing them during crushing has recently been devised.

The husks may be given a profitable market form by agglutinating them into fire-kindlings by means of melted rosin. The oil expressed from decorticated seed can be more easily and perfectly refined than that obtained from non-decorticated seed.

The oil expressed from cotton-seed is mahogany-coloured, and carries in solution complex matters from the cake which render it very impure. It is known commercially as 'crude oil;' and, to fit it for industrial and domestic purposes, it must be subjected to two treatments: purging and refining. For the first of these caustic soda has a special adaptability, and is universally employed. An aqueous solution of soda of about seventy-two per cent. purity is prepared; and about twenty-four gallons of this liquor per ton of oil will separate the grosser impurities as a mucilaginous deposit, involving a certain percentage of oil. This is a desirable material for soap-making;

and for this purpose it now finds an extensive outlet.

The action of this soda treatment upon the crude oil is as follows: It combines with the albuminoid and extractive impurities to separate them from the oil partly in soluble and partly in insoluble forms. But, having done this, instantly its energy is extended to these precipitated impurities themselves; and enough of them are driven back into the oil, either chemically or by intimate diffusion, to create the chief difficulty in the subsequent refining. The colouring matter, which is naturally in an intimate state of mechanical suspension, is thus converted into a dye to stain the oil a deep orange-colour, and also acts unfavourably upon the stearine constituent, imparting to it a sickly whiteness and a granular tendency. This solid constituent should be removed from the refined oil which is intended for table and culinary purposes, or wherever fluidity and clearness are particularly desirable. The separation can be effected by mechanical means, easily and profitably; for the eliminated stearine would command a higher price than the oil itself.

The refiner, therefore, has to contend not only with the original impurities of the crude oil, but also with the modified phases of them which have intruded into the 'purged' oil through the action of the soda. This treatment leaves in the oil a remnant of foreign matters, dark colour, foul odour, rough taste, and a tendency to rancidity which are difficult to remove. The uninitiated may acquire an acquaintance with this smell by visiting the neighbourhood of a fried-fish shop, and with the rough taste by a cautious consumption of cheap pastry.

The refiner meets rather than overcomes his difficulties by measures more forcible than philosophical. Acids and chemical bleaching-agents of various kinds are resorted to at this point, their effect being to mask temporarily such impurities as they are incapable of removing, to act chemically upon the oil itself, and through it upon the articles of food with which it may be subsequently combined or brought in contact.

Each refiner selects these objectionable reagents at his own discretion—or want of it—and handles them in the fashion best suited to meet the economics of his own refining installation. The favourite bleaching-agents are chloride of lime dissolved in water, supplemented by oil of vitriol diluted with water; the ratio of each per ton of oil being sometimes as high as six pounds seven ounces of chloride of lime and five pounds of the oil of vitriol. The whole of this combination is heated by a steam current, often to the boiling-point, in defiance of the fact that any fixed oil, if heated above one hundred degrees Fahrenheit, is apt to develop rancidity. Fuller's-earth is sometimes used as

a cleanser and sweetener, and, being neutral to the oil, is not directly harmful. It is difficult, however, to remove by washing either the last traces of it or the earthy taste which it imparts.

Although the oil has been chemically acted upon during the above-noted handling, it would be possible to prevent further action by relieving it at this point of all traces of the refining agents, by washing them out with several relays of warm water. But as both impurities and chemicals will thickly encrust the sides of the operating tank, the oil should be drawn from it into a clean one before being drenched. Although water is but sixpence per one thousand gallons, and two hundred gallons of it would cleanse one hundred gallons of oil, the most of the refined oil in the market is sent there insufficiently washed, and the refiner considers that he attains to the acme of good management when he conducts the whole of the cleansing (?) operations in one and the same tank.

Recent researches into the chemistry of oil-refining prove that the impurities which cling to the purged oil after the first soda treatment may be largely removed by a second soda treatment, provided the solution be prepared from caustic soda that is practically pure (ninety-eight per cent.), and that it be used in small quantity.

The elimination from this treatment differs in chemical composition, appearance, and bulk from that deposited by the first purging. Cleansing and sweetening may then be completed with the aid of powdered whiting, which is made to diffuse itself intimately by stirring, the action most probably being solely mechanical. In sweeping through the oil it collects the impurities in small clots or balls, which deposit themselves when left to settle, so that the clear oil above may be drawn off for washing. The bright golden tint which is characteristic of pure cotton-seed oil is thus allowed to appear; the paler or lemon-coloured oils have been chemically bleached. The sweet, nutty, natural flavour is also allowed to manifest itself because high temperature has been avoided. More recent researches have resulted in a philosophical method of making one soda treatment a sufficient precedent to the whiting.

In the decennial period between 1883 and 1893 the shipments of cotton-seed oil progressed from 415,611 gallons to 9,462,074 gallons. In 1889 British India produced 27,000,000 cwt. of cotton-seed, of which only 37,000 cwt. were exported. As the crop everywhere increases annually, it will be seen how abundantly nature supplies that all-important element in nutrition—an assimilable fat-food.

Although cotton-seed oil has been degraded to the position of an adulterant, smuggled upon our



tables in disguise, and charged with noxious ingredients foreign to its composition, yet it has been for years a growing source of national wealth. Released from the disabilities with which it is so unjustifiably hampered, it would prove an invaluable food, the benefits of which could be extended to the poorer classes in particular; for practical science would point the way to many new channels for its utilisation.

At present the British crusher supplies the

stock-raiser with cotton-seed cake loaded with innutritious husks, or sells him at a fancy price decorticated cake imported from the United States. While the broker deals in American cotton-oil commanding the highest market price, the refiner at home manufactures a cheap article for conversion into products which legislation threatens to drive out of existence. The situation demands consideration from a broader view of commercial economy.

## 'HER MAJESTY'S MAILS.'

### A PERSONAL REMINISCENCE.



LOOK at Donald Macgregor you would never have supposed him to be a man hopelessly discontented with his lot; such, however, was the case. Under a placid exterior he hid a heart and sentiments that would not have been misplaced in the breast of a Napoleon—or, perhaps it would be more appropriate to say, of a Columbus, a Captain Cook, or a Nelson; for, like these, he followed the profession of the sea.

Macgregor was the master of a small steamer, the *Henrietta*, that every now and then slunk out of the estuary of the Clyde, laden with iron pigs or pots, and crept cautiously coastwards to Liverpool or Bristol, occasionally even as far as London. In spite of her romantic name, the *Henrietta* was not fair to look upon. Her features were plain even to ugliness, and she resorted to none of the arts of coquetry to set them off. Her sides were generally splashed with unsightly patches of red and gray paint, some streaks of which seemed to have reached as far as the battered black funnel. Her deck, on which the most conspicuous object was an evil-smelling donkey-engine morosely surveying a scene of desolation, was of rusty iron. Not a vestige of polished brass ever glimmered in the most brilliant sun to indicate that some anonymous finger had at least made the attempt to improve her personal appearance.

When the worst has been said of the *Henrietta*, however, it is probable there could be found in the world men who would have been satisfied to command her; but Donald Macgregor was not among the number. His right place, he felt, would have been on the bridge of one of the spick-and-span huge mail-steamers that were continually passing him with such disdain in the Irish Channel. There would be some excitement in such an existence! To feel an enormous mass of wood and iron quivering and vibrating under your feet, yet responsive to your slightest wish, and to know that hundreds of human lives depended upon you and you alone, was very

different from the prosaic task of piloting the *Henrietta* from one grimy wharf to another. Yet this, or some similar work, is what Macgregor had been engaged in uninterruptedly now for nearly twenty-five years, ever since he had left the China trade and 'settled down' on his marriage. More than once he had found himself wondering whether a young man who, in sheer exuberance of animal spirits, had tweaked pigtales in the lanes of Canton and Shanghai was the same person whose whole interest in life was now centred in the tally of his iron pigs being found correct. The blue skies and voluptuously lazy seas appeared like dim reminiscences of some former state of existence. Gradually, however, as the years went by, he had grown, if not satisfied with his life, at least almost reconciled to it, for the unexpected might be said to have been entirely eliminated, and he had long ceased to think a change possible.

One day he was summoned by his owner to Glasgow, and, without any preparation, was asked point-blank whether he could navigate the *Henrietta* to a port on the Red Sea if he were required to do so. The Government had advertised for transports to carry rails, and the services of the *Henrietta* had been tendered. Macgregor, who was at first inclined to be offended that there could be any doubt whatever on the point, replied with considerable dignity that if he could not take his vessel to the North Pole if necessary he would not have been granted his master's certificate thirty years previously.

'I assure you, Captain Macgregor, I would never dream of casting the slightest reflection on your seamanship. We have had too many proofs of your abilities already. I merely thought that perhaps you might not care to leave Europe.'

Macgregor easily allowed himself to be pacified, the more so as the mere prospect of a break in his monotonous life elated him beyond measure. He made up his mind on the spot that he would not mention the project for the present to his wife, fearful lest she might do something

to prevent its realisation; and for the next week he supported the stream of her ordinary sarcasms with stoic equanimity. It was only when the matter was definitely settled, and it was too late to withdraw, that he took her into his confidence, gilding the pill by explaining to her that, as the spouse of the commander of a transport, she might almost consider herself as good as the lady of a captain in the Royal Navy.

A month later the *Henrietta*, or rather Transport 247, four hundred tons or so of steel rails in her flanks, was laboriously plodding through the Bay of Biscay, lurching ominously in the trough of the heavy seas. In honour of her new duties she had been given a fresh coat of black paint, while on each of her bows enormous figures, black on a white ground, proclaimed that, like a convict, she had lost all individuality, and for the nonce was nothing but a number. Macgregor paced the bridge with as consequential a strut as if he had been a young lieutenant put for the first time in command of one of Her Majesty's ships of war. Patriotism burned in his veins, and he was firmly persuaded that he had a great rôle to play, totally unaware, fortunately for his peace of mind, that the *Henrietta* was but an insignificant pawn in a sinister game arranged by the Government of the day to distract the attention of a credulous public. After he had passed Gibraltar, and had been, in turn, greeted from the Rock in response to his having run up his number, he was almost unapproachable by his mate.

The black horsehair sofa that occupied one side of the microscopic cabin was covered from end to end with books of sailing instructions and charts for the navigation of the Red Sea, all of which had been furnished by the Admiralty; and, whenever he had an hour to spare, Macgregor pored over these with the greatest assiduity. Port Saïd was duly reached, and the Canal traversed without any untoward incident happening. At Suez a signal was made from the shore to lie to; and half-an-hour later a steam-launch came alongside with an order from the transport officer to wait until evening, as there was a mail to take down to Suakin. This was almost too much for Macgregor. To carry mails had been one of the greatest ambitions of his life. Not only was the *Henrietta* practically part and parcel of Her Majesty's Navy, but she was also to carry Her Majesty's mails!

Late in the afternoon the same launch made its appearance once more, and a flabby gray canvas bag with imposing-looking seals at the neck was handed on board. Macgregor received it almost with reverence, and, having signed a receipt for it, had it conveyed with great solemnity to a cupboard in the cabin, which was carefully padlocked. The *Henrietta* a mail-steamer!

It was at Suez I renewed a previous slight acquaintance which, strangely enough, I had with Macgregor. I had barely set foot on the vessel before he apprised me of the fact that I was on the deck of a mail-boat. He appeared both surprised and hurt that this communication made, apparently, so little impression on me, and, I am convinced, put me down then and there as a person whose intellect had deteriorated. I was the only passenger on board, however, and it was inevitable that we should become more or less friendly under these circumstances.

Before we retired for the night he had confided to me many of his anxieties. In the Admiralty sailing instructions which he had been perusing so diligently for the previous fortnight the navigation of the Red Sea was represented as being excessively difficult, and Macgregor was at no pains to conceal the misgivings with which his reading had inspired him. 'It's evidently a terribly tight place to get through,' he said. 'The Straits were supposed to be difficult enough to tackle; but they must have been child's-play to the Red Sea.' Nothing I could have said, of course, would have had any effect; but the mate, who had a choice vocabulary of technical seafaring terms, tried to reassure him, expressing the opinion that the books and charts were 'all rot,' and that he had not the least doubt they were simply the result of some plot between the printers and the clerks in London to put money into each other's pockets.

Macgregor pooh-poohed this theory as too absurd for consideration. It was declared in one of the books of instructions that a dangerous coral reef ran down the entire western side of the Red Sea, a few miles from the shore. Here and there in the reef there were gaps through which vessels bound for Suakin and other ports might pass; but to discover these passages was no easy matter. One of these gaps existed a certain distance to the north of Suakin, and was to be found by bearing in a south-south-west direction of what the instructions described as 'a large white ruined tomb,' situated a little way inland. Without the aid of this landmark there was no hope of making the passage, nor, consequently, of ever reaching Suakin in safety. Macgregor told me that the emphatic terms in which this was couched had made such an impression on him that he had dreamed about the tomb every night since he had entered the Mediterranean. I am the more inclined to believe this, for I dreamed about it myself for the next two nights.

He made up his mind that he would find that tomb if it were possible, and drew up his plan of campaign very carefully in consequence. He began by calculating the exact number of miles from Suez to the spot where the tomb was represented to be, and then reckoned that if he drove

the *Henrietta* at full speed, he would come abreast of the tomb shortly before nightfall on the third day out from Suez. This would never do, he told me. He must time his arrival as near dawn as possible, so as to have plenty time in front of him to look for the tomb. With this object in view, therefore, the engineer was instructed to put the engines at half-speed. On taking the sun the following day, however, Macgregor found he was a good many miles short of the position he hoped to be in, and the engines were once more put full-speed ahead. Next day, when noon arrived, he found he had made more than he ought, and the engines were immediately put at quarter-speed. When evening came he told me he had decided to remain all night on the bridge to be sure of finding the tomb.

The morning was pretty well advanced when I woke, and I speedily became aware that the *Henrietta* was conducting herself in an unusual manner. She appeared, in fact, to be waltzing. Dressing as quickly as I could, I went on deck to investigate, and very soon had an explanation of the mystery. Macgregor was on the bridge, armed with a formidable telescope, every now and then shouting a peremptory order down the speaking-tube to the engine-room. In answer to my inquiries, he told me that no white tomb was to be seen—nothing but an interminable succession of low scrub-grown sand-dunes. From the explanation he gave me, which was somewhat nautical, I made out that he had been running in as close as he dared to the reef, backing away each time he got too close to be safe. This manœuvre he had been repeating for several hours, and this it was that had given me the impression that the *Henrietta* was dancing. When evening came we were no farther advanced. Not a vestige of anything that could possibly be taken for a tomb, white or black, ruined or intact, had been seen.

'I wouldn't mind,' said Macgregor, 'if it were not for the mails. It will never do to be late with them. A mail-steamer ought to allow nothing to stop her.'

That night a council of war consisting of Macgregor and the mate was called in the cabin, and I was allowed to be present in the unofficial character of a spectator. Most of the speaking was done by the mate, who opined in language as profane as it was emphatic that the Admiralty and all its works were accursed, and that, for his part, he did not believe the ruined white tomb had any existence at all. He cited innumerable instances tending to prove that naval officers were all arrant fools, and wound up by roundly declaring that not only did he doubt the existence of the tomb, but of the reef as well, or at any rate of the danger of the reef. Though he was visibly more than once inclined to concur in the opinion of his lieutenant, Macgregor restrained himself,

feeling that the honour of the service was now his. He said, however, that it was absolutely imperative that the *Henrietta*, being a mail-steamer, should reach her destination on the following evening, come what would; and it was finally decided that, if by noon next day the tomb had not been seen, the *Henrietta* would simply steam straight for the place where the reef was supposed to be, and take her chance of there being enough water on it for her to get over without touching. It is certainly no exaggeration to say that neither Cæsar before he crossed the Rubicon nor Clive on the eve of Plassey had more serious self-communings than those of Donald Macgregor, master of the *Henrietta*, that night. He had made up his mind that, if it were in the power of man, the mail-bag which had been entrusted to him should be delivered in Suakin next evening at latest.

The eventful day dawned at last. When, at eleven o'clock, no sign of the tomb had been seen, it was clear that the moment for carrying the great resolution into effect was at hand. Every one on board was becomingly serious. It was a scorching June day, and the sea was perfectly smooth. Not only was there no trace of a tomb, but the reef was only just distinguishable by a slightly different shade in the water. The order was given to put the engines full-speed ahead, and the *Henrietta* was steered straight inshore. Ten minutes later she had passed safely over the reef, and Macgregor was mopping the perspiration from his forehead with a large red handkerchief. His honour was saved. Suakin would get its mail that night!

Sure enough, some four or five hours later a heap of low-lying crumbling white ruins came into view, and about seven o'clock the *Henrietta's* anchor-chain was rattling out. A small brass cannon that was on board was discharged with a feeble bang, and Macgregor signalled to the shore that he had an important communication to make.

'Don't you think it is rather late this evening to bring any one out?' I ventured to ask him.

'It might be, if I had not a mail on board. As it is, every other consideration must give way to that,' he replied impressively.

Quarter of an hour later we saw a boat putting off. It was rowed by Arabs; in the stern was a white man in ducks, no doubt a naval officer. Macgregor ordered the flabby gray bag to be brought on deck, and, with great dignity, took up his station on the bridge, having donned for the occasion a gold-laced cap which I had not yet seen him wearing.

'Who are you? What do you want? Where do you come from?' came in authoritative tones from the boat.

'The *Henrietta* from'—

'Confound your name! What's your number?'

Macgregor reflected that the number was staring

his interlocutor straight in the eyes in figures a couple of feet or so in height, but he answered meekly enough, 'Two hundred and forty-seven, sir.'

'No room in harbour—full—follow reef—ten miles south—anchor beside other transports—wait orders.'

As the last words reached Macgregor's ears, the Arabs, at a signal from the speaker, had already begun to row back towards the shore.

'And the mails?' screamed out Macgregor.

'Eh?'

'The mails!'

'Your rails? Do as you're told.'

## THE REVIVAL OF POSTING.



ANY people can still remember the days of stage-coach travelling: the well-kept roads, thronged with vehicles; the bustle of arrival and departure at the various posting-houses; and the various incidents and adventures connected with the journey. With the invention of the steam-engine, and the more rapid means of transit that it offered, all became changed; the roads grew neglected and deserted, the posting-houses silent and forlorn, and the stage-coaches and their garrulous drivers disappeared one by one from the scene. Though we all acknowledge that everything comes round again, with variations, no one, probably, has ever dreamed that posting would be revived, and that the country roads and inns would wake from their long slumber, and be once more the busy haunts of old. But time, that loves to work in a circle, has brought, or is about to bring, back the former custom of road-travelling; though the old-fashioned vehicle with its team of horses will be exchanged for horseless carriages driven by electricity; and it is their universal use, which, in consequence of a new idea, will undoubtedly soon take place, that will revive almost all the adjuncts of coaching. One of the difficulties hitherto preventing the more general application of electricity for transport purposes has been the impossibility of carrying sufficient motive-power for a long journey, or of renewing it *en route*. To meet this objection a company has just been started in Paris, under the title of The International Electric Posting Company. It proposes to establish on all carriage-roads postal relays, destined not only to recharge the accumulators of exhausted electric vehicles, but also to light hitherto neglected and dark neighbourhoods.

The company will naturally begin its operations in France; thereafter it intends to take the roads of Belgium under its care, and then those of other countries. It is easy to see that this suggested perpetual service of electricity will give rise to many changes. It will undoubtedly bring about a greatly stimulated trade with regard to auto-cars for pleasure purposes, and will also entirely revolutionise land transport. The industry of automobilism will enter on a new and apparently boundless course when the driver of an electrical conveyance can feel certain of being able to obtain

the necessary motive-force for his vehicle anywhere on the road, and when he can ensure not being left high and dry in some lonely spot, miles from his destination and without the faintest prospect of succour; it will follow that the highways and byways will soon be crowded with trade-carts, stage-coaches, omnibuses, and wagons of all descriptions driven by electricity. There are still many places which the railway, though perhaps not far off, does not exactly touch, and many, too, that, owing to cross country, are only to be reached with much delay and vexation of spirit.

The new idea will do away with such trouble, and to outlying districts will prove an undoubted boon. In addition to recharging exhausted electrical accumulators, the French company engages to cater for the wants of the petroleum-driven carriage, and to supply all the possible and impossible requirements of cyclists. It aims also, in fact, at establishing a chain of excellent country hotels, where all the necessities of travellers will be carefully studied, medical aid included. Probably the railway companies will be the principal sufferers by and objectors to this scheme. Most of us will gratefully acknowledge the enormous advantage to be gained by the general public. Approved or not, there is no doubt that electricity is the future mode of conveyance; and the company that is first in the field to supply what will soon be a crying necessity deserves to be both welcomed and thanked.

## A WINTER LOVE-SONG.

DEAR, if my love could change this earth for thee,  
As thy sweet smile has changed a lifeless heart,  
These sad, bleak days, this wild inclemency,  
Of thy life's calendar should form no part:  
But while thou sleepest, Death to Life would start,  
And sound of springing flowers—born for Love's sake—  
From wintry dreams, my lady would awake—

Wake to a rustling in her canopy,  
A smell of earth new-washed with April rain,  
A bird's song in the budding apple-tree,  
A patch of sunshine on her counterpane,  
A breeze that comes and goes and comes again;  
And Love's voice, with the bird's voice, calling clear,  
'Arise! make glad with us, for Spring is here!'

R. R. WILLIAMSON.